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Industrial Education Among Primitive Peoples

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INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES

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The limits set upon our discussion necessitate inadequacy, but not incorrectness. Let us understand the terms we are using.

Education is not learning: there are learned people whose education seems to have been sadly neglected; and there are educated people who have unfortunately been debarred from the great paths that lead to learning. Ideal education, however, runs *pari passu* with the acquirement of knowledge. Education is the orderly leading out of powers that would otherwise run to waste. Or, to phrase it differently, education, of whatever variety, is the art of complete self-mastery.

Industrial education, however, is not so much a variety as a method of education. Through many centuries the tools of the Western educationalist have been in the main literary, but of late he has added other tools to his kit; woodwork is used in many lands, for example, and so are other handicrafts. Now the aim of the Primary School teacher who uses woodwork is not to produce carpenters,

but to train pupils in habits of observation, forethought, accuracy, neatness, clear thinking, and so on. It is his way of applying the educational maxim: "Learn by doing." And he finds it especially successful in developing a certain type of mind. The missionary who specializes in Industrial Education, whether he works in wood, metal, textiles, land, or other material, allows this idea to dominate his activity.

There is another idea: the production of craftsmen—an idea which is good in itself but is better still when it is subordinated to the other great master purpose of producing men.

Why does a Missionary Society train craftsmen, seeing that its business is redemption?

Ships are built in water-tight compartments, so that when one compartment is damaged the vessel may still make her port. But men are not so constructed. To redeem a primitive people, the redeemer must care for the whole man—soul, mind, and body. Thrift, forethought, and the proper care of health are Christian virtues, but they demand something better for their realization than the conditions of primitive society. African missionaries have to lay constant stress on the need for purer family life and higher sexual morality; but the fire goes out of the appeal when it is made to a family that lives in a mud hut, five or six yards in

diameter. Urge them to build single cottages of three or four rooms, and you know that your advice is impossible to follow. It takes a white man to build that cottage. Very few Africans earn a dollar a day; but, when upon rare occasions a white artisan is available, he wants seven or eight dollars a day for building and must be provided with imported materials. If the African is to live in a simple cottage, he must be taught to build it for himself and to use whatever local material is available.

Steady, intelligent toil is necessary for the upward climb of a tribe. A habit of industry is a fine prophylactic against temptation: idle men are always flabby. But men don't work for the sake of working—till they become thralls of the joy of creative art. Before industry can capture the imagination of the crowd, the crowd must come to see that industry means what they want. And when you are dealing with a primitive people, that means a higher standard of civilization all round. You cannot lift the individual far above the community: in sociology as in astronomy you have to reckon with the tendency of the mass to pull the fragment into its own orbit. And it is hard for an American to imagine the extent to which an African is a fragment of his tribe: he is a political zooid rather than a free and independent citizen. There used to be an idea that the sole duty of

a missionary is to labor for the salvation of souls; but that idea died of senility—R.I.P. The modern missionary knows that he can act upon the community only through the individual, but he is out for the salvation of the community—the redemption of tribe and nation. He who makes one acre worth two is a benefactor of the race; but there is something bigger than acres—MEN! Surely he is a greater benefactor who makes one man worth two. The missionary who spends a lifetime using the method of Industrial Education as it ought to be used, can make almost every individual that passes through his hands worth two, and hundreds worth half a dozen each.

Industrial Education helps the African, too, to keep down to the practicalities of life instead of chasing phantoms. If he gets book-learning alone, he is apt to think it the proud privilege of the learned to live without work. And once that idea gains possession of a man, white or black, his damnation has already begun. African youths find it hard to realize that, however extensive their knowledge of books, they are not educated till they have learnt to control themselves and to use their powers in subduing the earth and ministering to the uplift of the community; and Industrial Education provides the readiest method of teaching this lesson. Mere book-learning tends to produce swelled head in Africans, especially if it brings a certifi-

cate or two. Now swelled head is a kind of mental flatulence, and (as my medical friend would say) rich food and indolence are contra-indicated. Natives rely upon an excellent memory to pull them through an exam; but they have to use their brains to produce a decent bit of work. The failure of the craftsman is immediately visible, unless he does his own thinking and compels brain, eye, and hand to work harmoniously. When people discover that education means more work, better work, and the joy of the artist in the worker, then their feet are on the path of progress.

It has been remarked already that no beautiful home life and no high ideal of morality is possible to people who live in one-roomed mud huts; whatever Diogenes found possible in his tub he probably took into the tub with him. But clothes count, also. Clothes do not make the man, though they are often his undoing; but proper self-respect and the dignity that ought to mark the sons of God is not fostered by the ragged and dirty garments that often festoon an African. European garments are not ideal for Africans—least of all for African women. But Africans are imitative, and the trader displays his fascinating stock of unsuitables. Will some philosopher explain why it is so *very* difficult to cultivate a sense of fitness in some people? If European materials are to be worn, they should surely be harmonized with the African fig-

ure and color. Hence the need for teachers of tailoring and dressmaking in Industrial Institutions.

But what sort of man is needed for this work of Industrial Education? In some respects the necessary qualifications vary with the possibilities and prevalent tastes of different lands, or even different districts. And in other respects the same qualifications are required all over the world. Where broad acres mutely appeal for labor, there is need for the agriculturist, horticulturist, aboriculturist, and gardener—the man who has mastered the mysteries of soil, climate, fertilizer, irrigation, germination, garnering, and the hundred other things that the Agricultural College has taught him. But in Africa agriculture is woman's work, though men are increasingly sharing it; and women teachers of agriculture can be most useful.

Blacksmiths are needed everywhere. Agriculture depends upon them, and so do almost all the basal industries of civilization. And there is nothing more obsolete than an African smithy, unless it be an African smelting-furnace.

Carpenters and masons have been referred to already; but wheelwrights and cart-builders are needed, too. It will be a fine thing for Africa when there is a native in every village who can build a simple cart from local material, in place of the

forked branch with pegs driven into the two limbs of the Y, which is called a sleigh. Wagons are in common use everywhere south of the Zambesi, and are in constant need of repair, owing to the hot, dry climate and the cool disregard of their owners for the natural limitations of a wagon.

In Africa, hunting is as manly as fighting; and the hunter makes garments and *karosses* (fur robes) for his family out of the pelts that he gathers. The herdsman, too, finds honorable employment in making sandals, thongs and other useful things out of the skins of his animals. The worker in leather can do very useful work, and has no prejudices to overcome. And saddlery, harness-making, and shoe-making, especially in combination, are easy trades to follow in African village life and are cheap to teach in an Institution.

Tin-smithing can be taught even more cheaply; and tinware is increasingly common throughout Africa. The raw material must be imported; but the saving in freight alone as compared with that of tinware leaves a good margin of profit for the local tin-smith, and he can often use old kerosene cans and cracker boxes to advantage.

Then there are native industries that ought to be mastered by those who have been thoroughly trained in the Western use of similar material, and utilized as instruments of Industrial Education.

Basketry, wire-weaving, pottery, the carving of wood, horn, bone, and occasionally ivory. Much of this can be done by women as well as men.

But perhaps the greatest need of all is women who can teach laundry-work, bread-making, the making and mending of garments, the care of children, domestic hygiene—in a word, women who can transform native girls into respectable help-meets for their husbands and mothers for their children.

Space compels condensation. Any man or woman who has been thoroughly trained in any craft that lies at the basis of civilization may find useful work in some Mission Field or other. And his denominational preference will count for little when he gets out yonder. I have constantly referred to Africa, because I know it best; but you can apply my remarks in a general sense to all the primitive races, and some of them are true of the ancient civilizations.

Let me guard you, however, against a very possible mistake. You cannot transplant American industry or American Christianity into Africa without acclimatizing them. And unless you know your job so well that you can take its essentials and discard its accidentals you cannot acclimatize it. To use simple illustrations, glue behaves differently on the upper veld from what it does on

the coast, and the carpenter must adapt himself to new conditions. Masons in Britain, probably in America, build wood blocks into walls that the joiners may have something to nail to; but to do that where wood shrinks abominably every dry season and swells while the rains are on is to court disaster. It is useless to teach bread-making, unless you show your pupil how to get a decent loaf baked in an iron pot on the ground. And so one might go on. To teach your craft successfully in Africa you must add the spirit of an explorer to the proficiency of a craftsman.

Then the ideal of the Western shop is rapid production and consequent commercial prices; and so the factory method and labor-saving machinery is utilized. That is not the ideal for Industrial Education in the mission field. What you want there is not to compete with the market, but to train a generation or two in such trades as they can profitably use in their own tribal centers for the uplift of their communities, and teach to their children, as the village tradesmen of America used to do. Machinery is impossible in tribal centers, and so are elaborate and expensive tools. Your ideal must be the village craftsman of your grandfather's day: hand work right through, each man completing his job, and every bit of work used to develop intelligence and character in the worker, as well as to give skill to his fingers. Give them

all the craftsmanship you can; but keep it well before you that craftsmanship is your tool for making boys into men, who will go home and use the tool for making other men. And no man is fully made till he breathes the spirit of Christ.

Then you must not draw the lines too hard and fast around your craft. Out there, it is not a question of infringing on the rights of some other worker. To use simple illustrations again: The carpenter must teach such simple painting as his pupils ought to do where there are no painters to do it; and the mason must sharpen and temper his own tools where there is no smith to help him, and make his own bricks; while mason and carpenter alike had better know how to do a little simple soldering.

But let us get down to what is more fundamental than craftsmanship and equally applicable to every mission field in the world. There is no room in Industrial Education for small people. There is no work in the field that requires a bigger type of man. Unless you know your business thoroughly, you are less useful in Industrial Missions than in America; and America can hide your failure as the mission field never can. But even if you know your job, you may be a hindrance rather than a help. Can you use your technical training for moulding men after a diviner pattern; for the making of men who will be the builders of a new civilization? Any pupil in your class is a

possible leader of his tribe along the new paths that civilization is opening to it, if you are big enough to handle him—especially the troublesome one. And the smallest of them is big enough to see whether you are a man or a marionette, and to treat you accordingly. If you are not a leader of men, stay where you can be a follower. If you are after dollars, don't touch this job. If you can't do without your electric toaster on the breakfast table, your iced drinks when the weather is hot, and the movies in the evening, stay where these things are. If you count the hours you spend in labor; if you define difficulty in terms of discouragement; if you cannot make something out of next-door-to-nothing; if you cannot find your way where there is no path visible; if you are helpless without your tools; if you are without company when you are alone; if you cannot find solitude in the midst of a crowd; if there is much dislike of the unlike in your make-up; if you think everything wrong that is not American; if you measure life by what people call "success"—well, then, pass this pamphlet on to a better man than yourself. It is not for you. You have only one life to invest; and though the men who are going over the top are much too few for the job they tackle, they would rather have you stay where you are than need a rescue party out there when they are too busy to attend to you.

But if you have a competent knowledge of some suitable craft; if your one ambition is to serve the Master-of-All-True-Servants by making men of those who will fail without you; if you have learned to be resourceful, self-reliant, reverent in handling men, patient with folk of feebler mentality, tolerant of those who cannot see through your eyes, avaricious of high-class work rather than reward; and if you are able to sweep a floor to the glory of God—why, you are the man we want, and we want you badly. And there isn't a city in America that offers a better investment for your life.

